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EDU 308 Fostering Language and Literacy Development Dr. McKool

Literacy Autobiography

As I sat down to write this essay, I found it extremely difficult to pinpoint my first moment of recognition to the world of reading and writing. After all, the reading and writing process starts from our very first day here on Earth. We hear the language of our parents and the society around us and start to develop oral language for ourselves. From there, we start the process of reading through books that are read to us, words we see and hear on television, and words that surround us on everyday items. The final step is putting all of our knowledge together in order record what we are saying and hearing. On top of all of this, it is said that we do not remember any events (unless dramatic) until about the age of five. So, how could I possibly remember the moment that reading and writing simply clicked in my brain? It soon became clear that I would need help remembering; therefore, I called the one person who would know best, my mother. After several hours, I was reminded of a couple of events that shaped my reading and writing abilities.

Before ever entering school, I was a child who loved the arts (everything from a television show to my mother reading a book aloud). This enriched my life and helped my reading and writing skills to grow. I enhanced my reading skills through educational television shows, such as *Sesame Street*. While most children only make it through a half an episode and zone in and out the entire time, I would be glued to the screen. I paid attention to every word, letter, and song. I would be able to recite full clips of a show just minutes after hearing them. This definitely enhanced my reading skills (along with my oral language skills). As a child, I also loved to be read too. I often would ask for my mother to read the same book to me for weeks straight (to this day I can still recite some of *Where the Wild Things Are*). This constant repetition allowed me the ability to memorize many books. Then, the next time I would read the book, I was able to read along with my mother. This helped me learn how to read independently and established some of the skills required for writing (such as recognizing and forming complete sentences). Therefore, before even entering Pre-School, I was well trained in many areas of literacy.

The next main event in my continuing journey with reading and writing came in Kindergarten when I was introduced to the Alphabet Friends. These were blow-ups that looked like human letters. Each letter took on a different personality and made letter recognition fun and exciting. For example, the letter “o” was represented by Miss O. who had both a lower and upper case “o” on her. Her mouth was wide open while she held a random object. I remember running around the classroom each Monday morning in search of the latest Alphabet Friend. It was something that was fun and exciting that got me interested in learning letter recognition. To this day, I own Miss O. because she was given to me by my Kindergarten teacher because my last name is Oliveti.

The final thing that I discussed with my mother was how I loved to draw a picture for everything that I wrote. As we learned in our studies already this semester, drawing can be an outlet into writing for some children. As far as I can remember, I was never formally taught this technique by any of my teachers. It was just something that I enjoyed doing and helped me focus. I would always draw a picture of what I wanted to write about before I wrote it. To this day, I still do this for many of my research papers. While the drawing no longer consists of stick figures, it now consists of a “spider chart” outlining everything that I want to mention in my paper. It is the visual learner in me trying to express itself.

After my talk with my mother, it was up to me to put the final pieces of my reading and writing journey together. I realized that through all of middle school and high school, I lost interest in these two areas. I only wrote when I had to turn in a school report, and I only read when I had to analyze a required text. It was not until a few years ago, just before entering college that I began to do these activities on my own again. The summer before coming to Rider University, I decided to pick up a play, *The House of Blue Leaves*, and read it (because after all, I was a theatre major). I feel in love with reading scripts and writing down my thoughts about them. Suddenly, reading and writing was fun again. I looked forward to the days where I could simply relax and lose myself in the world of theatre. To this day, with every free chance that I get, I will pick up a new play, read it, and write about it.

The above are just four in a series of many important steps that it took to fully develop my reading and writing skills. I have been blessed with the gift of loving reading and writing. It is with this love that I hope to inspire my future students. It is my goal that every student who enters the door of my classroom will leave a better reader and writer.